

The Bryan Personality

What is there about Bryan that pulls people to him and holds them there? What is it that has made it possible for this man to hold his place in the hearts of Nebraska people for thirty years? It is just thirty years since Nebraska people got the habit of listening to Mr. Bryan, thirty years since he had wished upon him what looked like the profitless honor of a Democratic nomination for congress in a hopelessly Republican district. He won in that election and that is the only office to which he was ever elected—still he talks to crowded houses everywhere, anywhere. Despite his many defeats, his many political deaths he remains the biggest Democrat of them all, the man nearest and dearest to the people of Nebraska, the nation.

Saturday night the people packed the Elks hall to hear him. It was the same old story of politics. The night was cold and wet, the streets muddy but the hall was packed. For the full two hours he held his audience, scores who had been unable to procure a seat, remained standing until they had heard his very last syllable.

Republicans, Democrats, wet and

dry and some only "middling" dry, came and stayed, applauded, shook hands with him and went home feeling the evening well spent.

The wonderful, magnetic man once known as "the Boy Orator of the Platte" now in his sixtieth year charmed his hearers just as effectively as he did back there in the early 90's.

What is there about this man that holds the old guard's affections for more than a quarter of a century, that wins the sons of these old guards and holds them, too?

The writer heard him first in '96—a student in the grammar grades, a Republican by birth we found it hard to follow his logic; but we felt his presence, the personal appeal of the man and no one was more proud of the pleasant greeting and hearty handshake than the little Republican girl with short curls and shorter skirts. Indeed, we were so happy over the honor of the matter that we walked around the old court house lawn at West Point to take our place in the ranks for a second opportunity to shake hands with the big man with the kind eyes. We have heard him many times since that day but never with more joy, more real satisfaction than last Saturday.

His voice has lost nothing of the old appeal. His personality nothing of the old charm. His eyes are as clear, as smiling, as filled with happy fun as they were twenty-four years ago. There is an indefinable something about the man that draws you to him. He is clean. He is fine. His very presence exalts you, edifies, inspires you to better things. To be with him is to see with him, to feel with him, to be just glad you are able to do whatever little you may do for him.

We went to Wayne to meet him Saturday afternoon and such a welcome as those Wayne people accorded him! The streets were knee-deep with mud. The skies were flooding the town. Mr. Bryan was mud-bound between Wakefield and there and the people waited for him in the city opera house upwards to two hours, waited patiently, gladly and stood as one man when he entered. His eyes shone. And why not? Was not such a demonstration proof that he held the old place in their hearts? He spoke for two hours and not a word was lost on his audience. They laughed with him, were serious with him, applauded him vigorously and when he finished they gathered about him, recalling the old days, assuring him they are for him today as then.

And here is something we noted particularly, everyone put his hands on him, some placed their arms about him, all felt the magnetism of the man, all felt their common ownership in him. We know now why he is called the "commoner." He is a commoner at heart. He more nearly represents the ideal presented by Abraham Lincoln than any living man. At Wayne there was no note of defiance in his tone—he sensed his audience at sight. There was no need for defiance, denunciation. It was a Bryan crowd—an audience of people with him, almost to a man. At Norfolk there was just a hint of defiance, a hint of denunciation. He knew there were elements in his audience that merited that defiance. They would have none of him. Their minds were closed to him. He dared them to do their worst!

It was the privilege of the Press folks to entertain him for the night. He seemed just as happy, just as much at home in our modest little bungalow as though he were the plainest friend or in the grandest home. A glass or two of sweet, cold milk, some biscuits and butter and



—Berryman in Washington Star.

we sat 'round the table and enjoyed a review of the years with him without thought of other than a friendly comradeship that bound us all. At breakfast he was the same simple citizen, enjoying plain food. Happy in the rest of the few hours he slept, he was ready for the early train for Omaha, where he spent another busy day.

What is there about this man's presence that gives you a feeling of safety, protection, friendship—a kind of benediction feeling that leaves you better prepared to meet the world's battle? Somehow, the little home seems more of a sanctuary, a sacred place because of his having been there; somehow there is a peace about him that calms, that blesses. Somehow he gives one the feeling that must have been that of Mary Magdalene when He appeared before her at the tomb. They may beat Bryan, may keep him out of public office—but they can't kill him, they can't keep him out of the hearts of men and women. Of all the men in American history in our time, no man shall hold the place that history will accord to him.—Norfolk, Neb., Press.

"BROTHER CHARLEY"

The professional politicians in the Democratic fold have but little love for Charley Bryan, the political Napoleon who sits in the Commoner office and keeps a close tab on the party leaders as well as all others who have to do with directing party affairs. "Brother Charley" is probably the first politician in the universe to adopt a country-wide card index system of keeping an accurate record of the party leaders in all the states. His system would compare favorably with the records in the war department at Washington whereby the government keeps a record of all men in the military service. Many politicians—those who cannot dictate to Charley or get him to follow their whims—would prefer he was not quite so active and persistent in this work. His cleverness, too, is very disconcerting to fellows, like for example, Hitchcock and Mullen. Tallayrand never played diplomacy among the kings and rulers of Europe any more cleverly than Brother Charley plays the political game, so far as being able to unfathom intrigues of party enemies and anticipate the intentions of those who attempt to betray the party into the hands of special privilege and towards the pit

of corruption. W. J. Bryan and his brother are eternally camping on the trail of party perverters and party wreckers. This is why this kind of fellows have such venomous hate for the Commoner and his political general—Brother Charley. How many times men have invaded Brother Charley's private sanctum in the Commoner office bent on pumping him for the purpose of playing a smooth game to get the brother to disclose things that would be valuable information to the enemies of Bryan policies. And just as often as it has been tried the fellow in each case has, with barely any exception departed without any more knowledge than when he entered, but on the other hand Charley Bryan usually obtains all he wants to know or endeavors to obtain and this is where he is a little bit the shrewdest political interviewer in the country, as more than one trained journalist has found out. The writer was the first newspaper man in the United States to publish—give to the outside world—Charley Bryan's card index and classified file system on party leaders and statesmen in all the states and also his card index system of delegates chosen in all the states to the national Democratic conventions. It was Charley Bryan's directing genius in this that enabled him to attend the last two national conventions and be able to place his finger more accurately on what could be expected of each delegate than any other man in convention hall; and, too, it gave him and his noted brother the master hold that enabled W. J. Bryan to keep an accurate tally on the total strength to rally about him for a mass attack on the opposing elements at the most vulnerable opportunity. This was strikingly shown when he hurled a united front at Baltimore

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